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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses problems in identifying giftedness in culturally diverse populations. Among topics considered are (1) the relationship of certain performance criteria to established educational models, (2) the effect of selection processes using performance criteria on identifying children from disadvantaged backgrounds, (3) the effect of multi-behavioral criteria on selection of gifted students from minority backgrounds, and (4) effects on the process-oriented curriculum/instructional strategies on children with high potential. An expanded definition of giftedness is offered, and the literature is cited for specific performance criteria and evaluation models. The role of process-oriented curriculum is considered, and advantages of using areas of strengths or interest to develop knowledge or higher level thinking skills in another area are noted. (CL)

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Identification and Programming for Black Gifted Children

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Panel Discussion The Gifted Minority Child: Mary Frasier
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Identification and Programming for the Gifted

The identification of children from Black populations has continued to be a concern of program planners for children who are gifted. The "cut--off" score generally used to certify giftedness has been shown to be ineffective in providing entrance of proportional numbers of black students into programs for the gifted. It is important, therefore, that consideration be given to alternative techniques for identification and subsequent programming for this minority.

Questions to be addressed

Questions to be addressed during this session are:

1. What is the relationship of certain performance criteria to established educational models?

2. What is the effect of selection processes using performance criteria, on idenfying children who come from disadvantaging backgrounds?

3. What is the effect of multi-behavioral criteria on the selection of gifted students from minority backgrounds?

4. What are the effects of the process-oriented curriculum/instructional strategies on children who have high potential?

Assumptions

To address these questions there are some important assumptions that establish a frame of reference for decision-making.

1. That observable behaviors can be indicators of the type and quality of the mental processes an individual possesses

2. That recognition of these behaviors can be taught

3. That exceptional ability in any area of human endeavor provides a clue to the possible existence of underdeveloped ability in other areas of endeavor

4. That giftedness can be exhibited in many ways, each having equal importance

5. That process-oriented curriculum lends itself to the needs of gifted children whether minority or majority.

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In order to identify these minority youngsters, attention must be given to defining giftedness and also applying that definition to the needs of the minority youngster. There is a need to recognize the interactive or intervening variables which influence the display of giftedness. These intervening variables can be a result of cultural diversity, geographic isolation, or socioeconomic deprivation.

The definition of giftedness to be used in this paper is as follows: Giftedness is the presence of or the capacity for high ability, task commitment, and creative problem-finding ability in the cognitive, psycholsocial, psychomotor, or creative areas singularly or in combinations.

The cognitive area includes certain learned capabilities in specific academic areas such as math and science. It also includes scores on IQ tests. The creative area refers to graphic and performing arts. This is referred to as creative products. The psychomotor area includes physical abilities related to bodily movements and manual dexterity. The psychosocial area includes leadership abilities which include a large array of social skills. The three clusters, task commitment, above average ability, and creativity are brought to bear upon each of the areas. Task commitment means that the individual commits energy and time to the area of interest. Above average ability refers to evidence of ability in any of the areas which ranks above the average according to accepted norms locally, nationally, or internationally. Creativity refers to the creative process which involves the ability to sense, to be intuitive, to feel and to use these abilities in problem finding and problem solving. For minority youngsters, capacity for high ability is important to be included.

Gardner (1983) has posited a theory of the varieties of intelligence, one which has meaning in the discussion of the identification and programming possibilities for the minority Black child. Attention must be given to a wide range of assessment techniques.

Performance Criteria

Performance criteria can be generated from behaviors which indicate ability to process information at high levels. These behaviors can be equated with certain SOI factors as well as certain creative behaviors. Some of these behaviors are typified in studies by Torrance (1971), Bruch (1972), Bernal (1972) and Baldwin (1977). The following list might serve as an example of some behaviors which indicate ability to process information at a high level equated with the Structure of Intellect.

1. Colorful, persuasive language skills with peer group.

2. Ability to use commonplace items for purposes other than those intended.

3. Ability to remember and report detailed information concerning events which occurred in community outside of school.

4. Ability to judge environmental situations by cues which are not usually taught in school.

Multi-behavioral criteria

The Baldwin Identification Matrix has been designed to include an array of assessment techniques which will help the planner to get a complete profile of the child. Information on the matrix represents the ability scores of children above the average of that school district or state or other large organizational grouping. The matrix gives a total profile and through its basic philosophy communicates the importance of each of the areas of giftedness. A supplemental checklist of the type of behaviors which can be equated with high level intellectual processing ability has been developed. The inspiration for developing the supplemental scale has been Mary Meeker's (1969) paper on 'New Directions for Identifying Disadvantaged Gifted". Some sample items from the checklist are:

1. Psychomotor-
   - a. ability to do skilled movements such as skate, to type, to waltz, to somersault, to punt, to juggle
   - b. ability to catch balls
   - c. ability to draw from memory

2. Psychosocial
   - a. sense of loyalty
   - b. sense of what seems fair or ethical for friends, playground leadership role

Creative
a. sense of loyalty
b. ability to think of novel ideas for survival in particular environment

Cognitive
a. ability to understand and plan activities related to usual environment and experience

Hilliard (1976) has presented an argument for looking for characteristics which could assist in the identification of the gifted minority. He has proposed that behavioral styles are a vehicle through which intelligence is expressed and if these styles could be clarified more information could be gathered. Behaviors he discussed are alertness, energy, confidence, humor, expressiveness, experimentation, social control, verbal creativity. As you can see from these behaviors, the areas fit very well into the basic areas that are included on the matrix which follows the definition given above.

Renzulli and Smith (1977) have discussed the need to recognize the minority gifted and have shown through their research in the inner city that peer nominations were accurate in identifying minority gifted. Thorndike (1974) has suggested that we look further than the mean differences of the major or minor group in determining the fairness of a test.

The Baldwin Matrix was used for a student population which was 90% minority in a study reported by Blackshear, (1979). Dabney (1980) and Long (1981) also discussed the use of the Baldwin Matrix in identifying Black students. Blackshear found that the highest contributor to the selection process was nomination from peers, parents and teachers. At the next level of analysis, it was found that peer nominations, mathematics, and parent nominations were the items most predictive of entry into the program. Dabney has reported that after four years of study, she found that among the children identified as gifted, high level leadership skills appeared to be predictive of success both in the program and in college entrance requirements.

Long's non-discriminatory identification model was used in identification of gifted minority students after norms had been set for for the local group. He suggested that Norms on group mental ability test and reading and math should be established, that the Raven's Progressive Matrices be considered for use along with subjective behavioral scales.

Rosenbach (1979) has argued that "most claims of 'test bias' are basically unfounded." He goes on to state that what we have is "a situation where tests are accurate predictors of school success (grades, scores on achievement tests) but where school success, in turn, is not very predictive of success outside of school" (p. 6). The implications of Rosenbach's analysis are significant as we consider proper identification strategies for locating Black gifted children.

Curriculum which focuses on processes

Many minority students will need help in developing the necessary skills for the challenge of qualitatively different curriculum. There will be a need to telescope some of the concepts to provide an opportunity for catching up on some of the deficit skills. At the same time some planning for extension of learning in the areas of strengths should be done.

The use of the areas of strengths e.g. excellence in music can be the vehicle through which math, history, etc. can be taught. Processes for investigating, hypothesizing, questioning, and problem solving will help black students acquire the needed skills to acquire knowledge and become producers of knowledge.

The subject matter of the content should include material which is related to the background of the student. I am not suggesting that students use books about blacks for all of their content areas but I am saying that literature lessons for example should also include examples of poetry of classical and contemporary black writers as well as that of the European and American writers. Black students must not be allowed to miss those facts and experiences which will prepare them to compete in the total population but lessons which include works by and about black writers, mathematicians, scientist and others, help to make the lessons relevant and help to develop a positive self concept.

Curriculum can be developed around the areas of strengths or interest for the purpose of developing knowledge or higher level thinking skills in another. An example of this idea is the modification of a history or music curriculum by exploring the parallel changes of the structure of Jazz and the socioeconomic climate of this country during particular times in history. Many parallels can be explored-profiles of leaders and the "coolness or rawness" of Jazz. The Etiology of words used in the vocabulary of Jazz, the history of the struggles of blacks and the music which was symbolic of that struggle will not only give these students an opportunity to engage in higher level thinking skills but it will give them a feeling that they are an integral part of the history of this country. The use of this process with all children enhances cross-cultural understanding.

Research by Baldwin, (1971) indicated that higher level thought processes for minority children with high potential was a tenable concept. The data showed that those children who had a good foundation of lower level processes were able to move rapidly toward higher level processes and subsequently improve their critical thinking skills. Those children who did not have a good foundation in the lower level processes did not do well in improving their critical thinking skills. This research highlights the importance of enhancing the lower level skills of these gifted students as well as enlarging and differentiating the goals of their crriculum.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has pointed out some problems and has suggested some solutions to these problems. However, there is a pressing need for continued research in the area of instrumentation for selection of these students. Research on the use of the matrix, the predictability of some of the items of the matrix, and the practical use of the matrix for Black students is being completed. There is a need for continual research in establishing those variables which are predictive of success in school and in life.

Further research in the role that self-concept plays in the identification process and in the subsequent success of Black students is a great need. An important element in the process is the attitude which both the teacher and the researcher take as they work with Black boys and girls. The most beneficial curriculum will continue to be a debatable issue due to the many differences among the needs of the Black population of students. Care must be given that a particular curriculum not be designated Black curriculum because the trajectories of expansion will be closed and the needs of many Black children will not be met.

We are moving in the direction of a greater awareness of the great loss of talent we risk if the concerted efforts of all concerned with education of the gifted are not brought to bear upon this problem.

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